

65-4224

24 July 1965

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The Honorable Dean Rusk  
The Secretary of State  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Dean:

In response to your request, we have prepared the attached study highlighting some of the problems faced by the Viet Cong.

Since I believe this will be of interest to Secretary McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, I am taking the liberty of sending copies to them separately.

Sincerely,

/s/ "Red"

W. F. Harbo

cc: The Secretary of Defense  
cc: The Honorable McGeorge Bundy

WFR/WE:blp

Distribution:

Original - Addressee

cc: The Secretary of Defense w/cy att

cc: The Honorable McGeorge Bundy w/cy att

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### MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Viet Cong Liabilities and Vulnerabilities

The Viet Cong are well known as a wily and aggressive foe. Their so-called maoist offensive is a calculated effort to attack and destroy government forces in the provinces under cover of the monsoon rains which hamper government reinforcement and resupply operations. Despite heavy casualties incurred in this effort and in previous campaigns, the Viet Cong have managed over the years to increase their strength by means of infiltration and local recruitment of manpower in areas of South Vietnam under their control.

While not minimizing their tenacity and resourcefulness, the Viet Cong also suffer serious liabilities and vulnerabilities, which, if anything, have increased as the fighting has intensified:

1. The Viet Cong are now meeting less success in enticing South Vietnamese youths into their ranks and are resorting increasingly to draft and impressment to replenish their units and build new ones. Youths 16 and under have been captured in combat with Viet Cong main force battalions and found to have minimal training and low morale.

2. The Viet Cong appear to be increasingly employing local troops in areas remote from their bases. This tends to negate some of the advantages the Viet Cong have had of deep familiarity with terrain and local conditions and easy access to the local populace for shelter and support.

3. Despite increased manpower from North Vietnam, including trained PAVN regulars, these DRV personnel suffer the same lack of familiarity with local geography and conditions, and risk exacerbating regional prejudices where they come in contact with locally recruited troops and the populace.

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4. Evidence that the Viet Cong are increasingly being equipped with bloc-manufactured weapons means that they are also plagued with longer supply lines and the need for extensive stockpiling.

5. Stepped up harassment from the air, together with more government ground probes into Viet Cong areas, makes them more vulnerable to disruptions during periods previously devoted to training and food production, and to destruction of or separation from their stockpiles.

6. The trend toward larger-scale Viet Cong attacks, and the more rapid and massive government retaliation through the use of jet aircraft, is causing the Viet Cong heavier casualties.

7. In recent months, Viet Cong defections have increased, and defectors and prisoners are reporting growing fear of air strikes, and lower morale, from increasing harassment.

8. Food is known to be short in some areas of central Vietnam, and poorer diets renders them more vulnerable to illnesses; shortage of medicines is a problem for the sick and the wounded.

9. Lack of supplies is forcing the Viet Cong to extract more goods from the peasantry, thus increasing resentment of the populace against them; their larger force strength and needs has caused them in the past year or so to double or even triple taxation of the populace, in cash or kind.

10. Likewise, the Viet Cong have begun to shift what initially appeared to be a promise of land reform into forced peasant production for the Viet Cong.

11. The Viet Cong appear to be resorting increasingly to terrorism and controls to keep the peasants in line and cooperating.

12. While it cannot be established that greater devastation from ground combat and air strikes does not arouse some resentment against the government, there are indications that growing numbers of the rural populace tend to blame the presence of the Viet Cong for bringing the war to their doorsteps and to regard them as increasingly unworkable.

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